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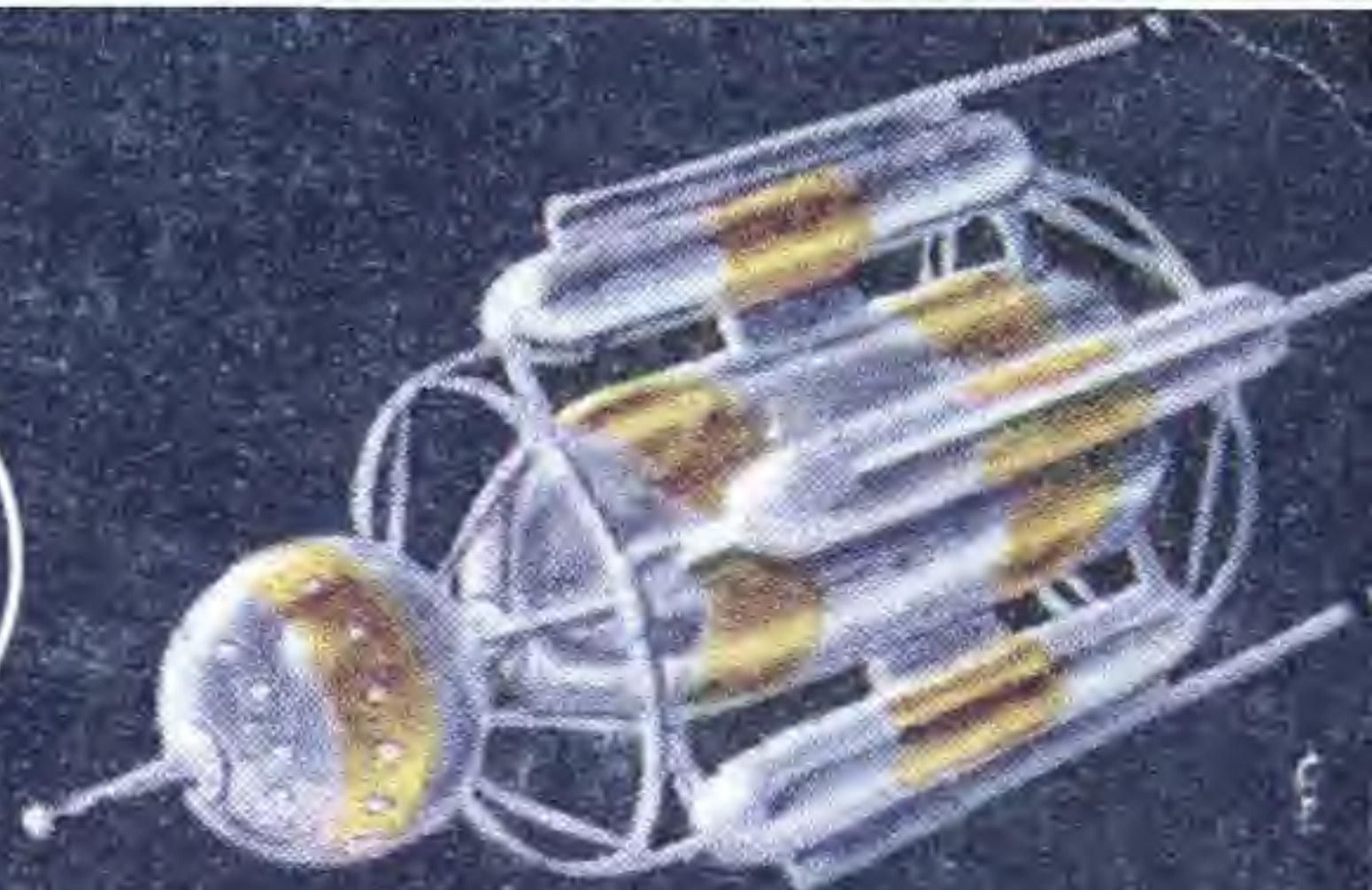
THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy and

Science Fiction
11-3



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DECEMBER



**NEW CONTEST
CASH PRIZES**

see page 2

ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS

ZENNA HENDERSON

ARTHUR PORGES

WILLIAM LINDSAY GRESHAM

A selection of the best stories of fantasy and science fiction, new and old

THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy and Science Fiction

VOLUME 5, No. 6

DECEMBER

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(*marooned on an asteroid*)

The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Volume 5, No. 6, DEC., 1953. Published monthly by Fantasy House, Inc., at 35¢ a copy. Annual subscription, \$4.00 in U. S. and possessions; \$5.00 in all other countries. Publication office, Concord, N. H. General offices, 570 Lexington Avenue, New York 22, N. Y. Editorial office, 2643 Dana St., Berkeley 4, Calif. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Concord, N. H., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Printed in U. S. A. Copyright, 1953, by Fantasy House, Inc. All rights, including translation into other languages, reserved. Submissions must be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes; the Publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.

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Robert Moore Williams has been writing science fiction for over fifteen years and, as we told him recently, a story by the author of the classic Robot's Return has been long overdue in this magazine. Thank goodness, we (and you) can complain no longer of such a lack. Here, Mr. Williams forsakes his pet theme of robotics for the moment and gives us a brief interlude on Mars, wherein the dynamic clash of two cultures reveals both a past and a future.

Aurochs Came Walking

by ROBERT MOORE WILLIAMS

SQUATTING BESIDE the machine, John Carnovan shifted his weight from one foot to the other, hoping he would be more comfortable that way. He wasn't. As if they had a will of their own, his eyes kept turning in their sockets toward the metal blade resting on its point on the stone floor within a foot of him. The blade was made of the ancient tough metal of Mars, the secret of which had been long lost. Carnovan's eyes followed up the blade to the face of old Mallar, who stood leaning on the sword and looking down. The human hastily took his eyes away from Mallar's face. He did not like what he saw there.

Tiernden, his Martian friend and fellow worker here, squatted beside him. The witch doctor, Kelgar, squatted on the other side of Tiernden, asking questions. The witch doctor looked like a crow, yellow eyes and all, an impression that was heightened by the black robe that he wore. The yellow crow eyes rarely left the crystal ball which Kelgar cuddled in both hands. The witch doctor seemed to be drawing information from the crystal, or to be pretending that he was, but whatever was the source of his information, the questions that he asked were shrewd.

Too shrewd, Carnovan thought, too calculating, too far-reaching in their implications.

Carnovan decided that maybe he detested Mallar and Mallar's six-foot sword less than he detested Kelgar and the witch doctor's crystal ball. He knew he hated both of them, but maybe he hated Kelgar the most, because the witch doctor was shrewder, and therefore more dangerous.

"You and the earthman have been here twice ten-times-ten-suns," Kelgar said accusingly.

"Two hundred days," Tiernden answered. The little Martian shivered as he spoke and his skin shifted its hue, taking on the color of old copper. A sort of Brownian movement seemed to be visible on the surface of the skin cells. "Yes, Holy One. That is about right."

"You and the earthman have made progress?"

"Certainly, Holy One." With the machine there in front of his eyes, Tiernden could not deny that they had made progress. "But —"

A growl sounded from Mallar. "Get to the point. Is the machine finished?"

Tiernden started to speak. As if he wanted to make certain that all reports passed through him, the witch doctor spoke first. "It is not yet decided, Great One."

Listening, Carnovan thought: "They call Kelgar Holy One and Mallar Great One. Yet Kelgar is what we would call a witch doctor and Mallar is the head man of a tribe of nomadic desert dwellers. There is no holiness in the witch doctor and no greatness in the chieftain."

Once there had been greatness on Mars. From this ruined citadel, from this very room, from this machine, that greatness had flowed outward. Mars had been ruled from here, ruled wisely and benevolently. Now a desert chieftain and his medicine man were asking questions of the two scientists who sought to revive that ancient rule, that long-lost benevolence.

Unease came up inside Carnovan as he sensed the reason for the sudden appearance here of Mallar and his tribe, and of Kelgar.

"What does your magic ball say?" Mallar asked Kelgar.

"It does not answer yet, Great One."

"What does *he* say?" The sword blade came up to point at Tiernden.

"I have been trying to say," Tiernden said, dignity in his voice, "that progress has assuredly been made. But we do not have the whole answer yet, nor the whole machine. A piece, a part, is missing."

"Um. What part?"

"It is hard to say exactly, Great One."

"Huh!" Mallar's eyes came to Carnovan. There was no liking of this earthman in them, or of any Terrestrial. The eyes said that Terrestrials were a race that had come across space, disturbing the old Martian ways, and that it would be better for all concerned if they returned into space from which they had come. "What does the earthman say, about the great machine, and the great power, and about progress?"

Carnovan rose to his feet. Even if he was willing to answer this question, he wondered how he could possibly answer it in terms that Mallar could understand. His grasp of Martian was adequate but neither in Martian

nor in English were there any words to describe this machine and the way it operated. In fact, Carnovan always hesitated before calling this device a machine — it had no mechanical moving parts. Inside of it, in a complex of crystal filters and tiny force fields, changes took place, energy was generated and flowed — elsewhere. Any device which generated or moved energy could be called a machine. But the energy generated here was of a most subtle kind. What kind it was neither Carnovan nor Tiernden had been able to establish. The *great power*, the old records called it. Perhaps the best that could be said in words was that the machine generated electricity *plus*. Plus what? This was one of the unanswered questions.

How could he explain this machine to a barbarian when he did not fully understand it himself?

But if Mallar really wanted to know if they had made progress, the machine itself was certainly evidence of that. At least, it was evidence of uncounted hours of patient toil. Once a machine like this had existed on this spot. When Carnovan and Tiernden had started work, only the foundation of the machine had been there, the hole in the rock where it had rested. The parts of the original machine had been scavenged by metal-hungry desert nomads generations ago.

Tiernden and he had translated the ancient records of the builders of the machine, puzzling out the hieroglyphics on the walls, following the directions of the long gone engineers. Thus they had slowly rebuilt the machine . . . all but one part of it.

All of this passed through Carnovan's mind in a split second. His eyes went to the walls of the room. The hieroglyphics they had translated covered most of these walls, carved there by a race that had once lived on this planet, had known greatness, and had gone to dust.

Carnovan's mind flicked back to Earth, to drawings he had once seen on the wall of a cave in southern France, deer, horses, aurochs. Long centuries in the past dawn men on Earth had carved those pictures on that cave wall, thinking that thus they exercised some control over the animals themselves, hoping that because they drew the picture of an aurochs on the wall of a cave, a live aurochs might be thus lured into the traps laid by the hunters.

This magic had been a dream of dawn men. It had failed. Dawn oxen had not walked into the traps laid by the hunters because artists — or were they early scientists? — had sketched a picture of the animal on the wall of a cave. No doubt the dawn magicians had found excuses for their failure. Perhaps the incantations had not been exactly right, perhaps some witch had interfered.

Carnovan's eyes went to the last wall in the big room. This wall was of smooth black stone, a natural blackboard. A scrawl of chalk marks showed

there, his handiwork, mathematical equations, the symbol of summation, Greek letters, the square root of minus one. These chalk marks were actually a mathematical development that went beyond Riemann, and described a non-Euclidian, non-Riemann universe. The equations went forward, then backtracked upon themselves, describing an involved concurrent relationship of matter and force, a progressing unity that seemed to create itself as it advanced.

Carnovan's handiwork! A glow came up in him at the thought. Actually the equations were a translation into human mathematics of the Martian wall hieroglyphics. They were a mathematical description of the recreated machine.

Were they also animals scratched on a cave wall?

Carnovan did not know, as yet. He suspected, or hoped, they were more than that. The glow in him grew stronger. He thought: *This is the record of my passage through the Laboratory. I, man! Here on this wall I have scrawled the notes of my discoveries made during my passage through this matrix of suns, stars, and men, mathematical equations, the laws of resonance, some of the laws of that strange configuration of energy called matter. I have dug them out of the Laboratory as I passed through it and I have written them on this cave wall so that your knowledge shall be greater and your passage through the Laboratory shall be facilitated, made more easy.*

What is the Laboratory? Yonder Earth, these planets, this solar system, this galaxy, this universe!

This dream of facilitating the passage of men — and Martians — through what he called the Laboratory had brought Carnovan to Mars, to this ruined, rocky citadel.

The growl in Mallar's voice jerked Carnovan back to the present. Carnovan pointed to the hieroglyphics. "We have translated these. This one accomplishment is a monumental achievement."

Carnovan pointed to his own figures on the wall. Because of the job he had done here, both Terrestrials and Martians might in the long run find life a little finer, a little fuller, a little better.

When the great power flowed again! Again the sense of achievement came up in him. He told Mallar what the figures meant.

The chieftain grunted, a sound that said, "Nuts!" in Martian as clearly as it would in English. Carnovan tried to suppress his anger. Again unease was strong within him. The room was still. Behind Mallar his two guards stood with drawn swords. Squatting beside the machine, both Tiernden and the witch doctor seemed to have lost the ability to move.

Carnovan sensed the will to power in Mallar, the will to rule, to dominate. A kind of sickness came up in him. He turned, moved toward the window.

As he moved one of Mallar's guards swung to face him, sword point up, but dropped the blade at a grunt from the chieftain. Mallar turned his attention to Tiernden again. Carnovan stood by the window, looking past the ledge outside it, down at the plain below.

Five hundred feet below the ledge, the ocher-colored plains of Mars began, stretches of sand broken by clumps of flowering shrubs. The plain below was dotted with tents now, the hide structures in which Mallar and his tribe lived. Dothars, the camels of Mars, ranged far and near, eating the flowering shrubs.

"They arrived without being expected or wanted," Carnovan thought sourly. "And he brought his whole bunch with him."

Then he saw that the whole tribe had not been brought. Worry moved as a fret through him. He looked again, to make sure.

"No females, no children, only warriors."

Behind him, Tiernden's apologetic voice was trying to describe why the machine was unfinished.

"So far as we know now, it can never be finished," Tiernden said. "A vital part is missing —" His voice said that he hoped if he said this long enough, it might be believed.

"He lies!" the witch doctor shouted. Carnovan spun from the window.

The witch doctor had risen to his feet. His finger pointed at Tiernden. Hard, grunted, guttural sounds poured from him, forming a reverberating harshness that filled the room.

"But, Holy One —"

"He lies!" Kelgar repeated. "The great power flows again. The great generator is finished."

"Is a space ship finished when it has no steering jets?" Carnovan said. "Anyhow what makes you think it is finished?"

"My magic ball says it. The great power flows again."

"Nuts!" Carnovan said, in English.

"My magic ball never lies! It says the great power flows again. Therefore the great power does flow."

"Ho!" The single word came from Mallar, a burst of triumphant sound. "Then it is real, Kelgar, as you prophesied?" Mallar did not doubt the magic ball of his witch doctor.

The witch doctor looked like a crow that had found a dead rabbit and was preparing to feast. "It is real, Great One."

"Ho! Does your magic ball say that I will have the great power?"

The witch doctor looked like a crow caught eating a dead rabbit by a hated and feared eagle in the sky. He glanced at his chief, then hastily turned his gaze back to the ball.

"It says you are the far-removed son of the great ones. It says the power will flow for you, and was destined for you."

"Ho!" The blast of sound from Mallar's lips was pure triumph. "With the great power, I shall rule all Mars!" The sword blade made a whistling triumphant circle in the air. "Then, earthman —"

John Carnovan tried to pretend he did not hear the words.

Now, he saw why he and Tiernden had been allowed to come here by Mallar. Other humans in the past had sought access to this spot and had been denied. Mallar, or more likely, Kelgar, had sensed that at last the right human and the right Martian had arrived to rebuild this machine. Mallar had let them come, hoping they would discover again the lost secret of the great power. So he could grab it!

Carnovan felt sickness in him as he realized what had happened and what would happen. In the Laboratory, there was no excuse for one man to have dominion over other men. He stepped forward.

"It is a true thing," he said. "I don't know how Kelgar got the answer — he must have guessed it — but he got it right."

"My magic ball is always right," Kelgar said.

Carnovan ignored him. "The machine has been rebuilt. I admit it. The great power flows again."

Mallar and his witch doctor looked like two crows with a dead rabbit big enough for both of them.

"But the control of the machine is missing. Without the control, the machine is worthless, like a wild dothar without a rider, like a space ship without steering jets."

The point of Mallar's sword came up.

Tiernden spoke quickly. "Without him, you will never know how the machine may be controlled. If a new control is to be built, he is the only one who can build it."

"It has been some time since my warriors have dragged a living body behind a dothar and enjoyed themselves spearing the body."

"It may be that you will pay a high price for your warriors' fun."

Mallar glowered, undecided.

"Show us the place where the missing control is supposed to go," Kelgar ordered. "I mean, with the permission of the Great One, of course."

"Well —" Mallar was still relishing the thought of spitting the human on the blade.

"We need to know more," the witch doctor urged.

"Consult your crystal ball," Carnovan said.

"Please!" Tiernden spoke in English. "There are easier ways to die than by being dragged behind a wild dothar."

For a moment, it looked as if Kelgar was about to incite Mallar to use his sword on this heretical earthling.

"I will show you where the control is supposed to go," Tiernden said hastily.

With obvious reluctance, Mallar and the witch doctor turned their attention back to the machine. One of the guards watched Carnovan with anticipatory relish.

"Here is the crux of the device," Tiernden said. He pointed to a bird-cage helix of bus bars that led upward from the machine, circled a slab of stone with a depression in the middle of it, and returned to the machine below. The control had rested in the depression in the stone slab. Obviously, it had been an induction device of some kind. The flow of energy through the control had directed the flow of energy within the machine, modulating and changing it. Tiernden burst into a torrent of Martian, trying to explain the concept of induction currents to two tribesmen who did not even know the meaning of electricity. Mallar listened with growing impatience, the medicine man with keen interest, his eyes constantly going back to the crystal he held in his hand.

"Then build a new control!" Mallar snorted.

"But, Great One — we cannot."

"Why not? You rebuilt this." Mallar's sword gashed the tough shielding of the machine.

"We do not know how to rebuild the control. The records are missing." Tiernden gestured toward the wall.

The hieroglyphics were carved on black basalt panels set into the wall. One panel was missing. It had been pried from its place by some tribesman hunting for treasure. The remnants of it were fragments of broken black stone upon the floor. They had already gathered them together and had tried restoration, a hopeless task.

"Fool! The dothar waits — for you instead of for the human!" Mallar's sword came up.

Tiernden's chin came up with the sword. "Destroy me if you will. I have told you the truth."

Mallar turned to Kelgar. "What says the magic ball — is this the truth?"

"Yes, Great One, it is true." Kelgar's voice was suddenly sharp with excitement. "At least, it is partly true. The control, the real original control, has not been destroyed. It still exists, but is lost."

"What?" Carnovan gasped. This idea had not occurred to him.

Kelgar's voice grew sharper still. "It is here, somewhere. It is here in these ruins, lost."

"Kelgar —" Mallar's voice was hard.

"So speaks my magic ball," Kelgar answered.

"Where is it hidden?"

"My magic ball does not say. But — your warriors could find a lizard lost in a sandstorm. Call them. Have them search the ruins here."

Mallar grunted to a guard. The Martian departed on the run.

"How will they, or you, know the control when they find it?" Carnovan asked. "They don't even know what it looks like."

"They will find it," Kelgar answered. "You will know what it is." Something close to a grin showed on the crow face.

Almost immediately tall, copper-skinned Martians were in the big room. Mallar gave them their orders. The whole interior of this mountain was honeycombed with passages, tunnels, and rooms, constructed by the gone Martian race that had reached for greatness, had grasped it in what they called the great power, and then had lost it — or had let it go.

Sounds of furious search came from the vast ruin as Mallar's warriors went about their task. Tiernden stood close to Carnovan and moaned softly at what his people had done and were doing. There was agony in the little Martian. He had dreamed that the golden age of Mars might come again. He had even studied the wisdom of Earth in the hope of restoring the ancient wisdom of Mars. Now he was watching his dream vanish in the grasping ambition of a barbarian chief.

Carnovan's eyes flicked across the wall where his equations were, the mathematical development which described the progressing unity that constantly fed back upon itself and created itself as it moved forward.

If only the aurochs would come alive!

Warriors were coming into the room, bringing with them the results of their search. They brought bits of corroded metal, a long-lost tool, a wheel that had once been part of some machine, fragments that had escaped other metal-hungry raiders across the centuries. At the sight of each fragment, Tiernden and Carnovan shook their heads.

Each time they shook their heads, Mallar's face grew harder.

Across the room, Kelgar kept his eyes on the magic ball, apparently to see if they were lying. Carnovan walked over and silently stood beside the witch doctor. Looking down at the crystal ball, the human stood transfixed.

In the depths of the crystal, an object was actually moving. It seemed to be swimming there, coming into clarity, moving up from vast depths to the surface. Carnovan recognized the moving object.

An aurochs!

The sight startled John Carnovan to the bottom of his being. He was a scientist, he lived in a universe of cause and effect. Aurochs simply did not move in magic crystal balls on Mars.

Carnovan looked again. The creature *was* moving, walking upward with short steps as if climbing an invisible hill. The horns and the hump were there. It was an aurochs seen in a crystal ball on Mars.

"What is that thing?" Carnovan whispered.

"It is a dothar flying," the witch doctor answered, without lifting his eyes.

"That? That is no dothar —"

"It is a dothar. Do you think I do not know a dothar when I see one —" Kelgar's eyes came up. He had been in a semitrance state and he had not realized he was speaking to this Terrestrial. Anger spurted to the surface of his face.

"Go away, fool!" His upflung hand caught Carnovan across the mouth. The earthman tasted the saltiness of blood as his lips were crushed against his teeth. Anger came up in him too. He caught it, held it beneath the surface. This was no time for anger.

"I'm curious about the crystal," he said, politely.

"This is not for earth eyes." Kelgar's face was a mask of suppressed rage and open suspicion. The crystal was his source of power. His hand went to the dagger at his belt.

"Oh, well —" Carnovan shrugged and moved away. The witch doctor's crow eyes followed him across the room, then went back to the magic ball.

To the depths of his soul, Carnovan was shaken.

"An aurochs was actually visible in that ball!" he whispered to Tiernden. The little Martian had other and more important matters on his mind. But he was polite. "An aurochs? I do not understand."

"An Earth beast."

"On Mars?"

"Yes. That's the part I can't understand at all." A thought came up inside Carnovan. He tried to shrug it aside, then expressed it in words. "Maybe it was the dream of an aurochs."

"An Earth beast dreaming in Kelgar's magic ball?"

"No. A man dreaming — of an aurochs." Even to Carnovan the words sounded silly. "But Kelgar saw a flying dothar."

The voice of Kelgar was suddenly loud in the room. "The control we seek exists."

"You said that before," Carnovan said.

"But this time my magic ball says more. It says that one is here who knows where the control is hidden."

A rumble sounded deep in Mallar's throat. "Which one knows?"

The witch doctor's finger pointed at Carnovan. "That one. The earthman knows."

"What? But I *don't* know."

"He lies."

"But I tell you —"

"You look at death, Terrestrial," Mallar spoke. "Where is that control? You have built it, then hidden it. Now you are trying to pretend it does not exist."

Carnovan shrugged. "The answer is obvious, Great One. Your witch doctor lies. I offended him and this is his way of trying to gain revenge."

"Wh —" Mallar's voice was a wordless growl.

"I do not lie! Look!" Kelgar was so enraged he extended the crystal.

Carnovan glanced at it. His own face was visible there. It seemed to him that a tiny John Carnovan was rising out of those crystal depths, swimming toward the surface as the aurochs had seemed to climb an invisible hill.

"See!" the witch doctor shrilled. "Your face shows in my magic ball. It means you know where the control is hidden."

"It may have some meaning but it does not have that meaning. I do not know —"

Mallar growled to the guards. Tiernden screamed as Carnovan turned. The two guards had seized the little Martian.

"What's the meaning of this?" Carnovan demanded.

"Come and see the meaning," Mallar answered. "Come to the window and watch."

The two guards carried the twisting but helpless Tiernden from the room. They appeared on the plain below, still carrying him. Shouting, they gestured to the other warriors there. The scene was like the telescreen projection of a play. Carnovan saw the dothar brought, a half-wild animal that kicked and bit. A leather thong was tied to the saddle, then to Tiernden's legs. The savages pushed him and he fell, to lie on the sand with his face down, making no effort to resist. Warriors ran to saddle their own dothars, then waited in the saddle, with spears uplifted, looking expectantly toward the window above them.

"When I signal from the window they will loose the dothar," Mallar said.

"I see," Carnovan said. Utter pain was in him, anguish as deep as space, as high as the sky. Sweat covered him now, pouring out faster than even this dry air could suck it up. The bitter wind from the plains of Mars seemed to sweep through him, cutting him to the bone without drying the sweat that drenched him.

"Where is that control?" Mallar said. The glow on his face said there was something about this situation that pleased him down inside.

Again the anguish surged through John Carnovan. A sudden spurting

clarity of mind followed it. In that clarity, as clearly as he had seen the aurochs walking, he saw the answer, sensed the answer, fitted the fact of the aurochs walking into the vast equation that operated here.

He knew where the control was hidden.

When he had put together those symbols on the blackboard, he had set up thought processes deep within him, configurations in his cortex that had sent out signals fainter than whispers on the other side of Mars — and louder than a thunder clap in the room, if you knew how to hear them. These signals from the configurations in his own cortex had resonated with — something. His cortex had been the transmitter, something else had been the receiver — the control.

The aurochs that had walked in a dream — or was it a prayer — in his mind, had also walked in — the control.

Tension made Carnovan laugh as he saw the answer. He couldn't help it, even though he knew the problem was not yet solved, only sharpened. It was all so ridiculously simple, if you understood it, and so ridiculously complex, if you did not.

Long ago, perhaps, when the collapse of the great race was just beginning, some marauder had stolen the control from the machine. The crystal ball had passed from hand to hand, stolen and re-stolen. Some remote Kelgar had discovered its power to generate visions and so it had generated another kind of power . . . the power to defraud, to rule by falsehood and illusion.

Or had that theft, a random act, marked the downfall of the race? Perhaps, from that moment on, they had been unable to control their mighty machine. Carnovan dismissed that idea. Those who could build one such crystal, could build another. No, the theft had occurred long after *they* were gone. . . .

"You laugh, earthman!" Mallar moved toward the window.

"Yes. I know what the control is. I know where it is."

"Tell!"

"The magic ball of your holy one. That is the lost control."

Mallar turned back, staring at his witch doctor.

Kelgar's face showed shock. And fear. His magic ball was his one weapon . . . and his one shield. It brought him tribute from the whole tribe, even from Mallar. And if the Terrestrial told the truth, Kelgar would not have to consult his sacred crystal to foresee just what was going to happen.

"He lies! Because I tried to gain revenge on him for casting doubt on my magic ball, he now seeks vengeance on me by saying that my magic ball is the lost control of the machine. Great One, we have been together many years. We know each other, we trust each other —"

"Yes, I know you," Mallar said. The tone of his voice said that perhaps

he knew this witch doctor too well. He looked at Carnovan. "What foolishness is this? Kelgar got his magic ball from the witch doctor before him, slew him for it, in fact!"

"Kelgar's magic ball is the original control," Carnovan answered. He was on very thin ice here and he knew it. "See this round depression here on the black stone slab under the rounded bars. The crystal once rested here. The great power was controlled by it. Perhaps your witch doctor knew this all the time."

Mallar looked a long time at the depression. His eyes came up to Kelgar. Words muttered deep in his throat but they were inarticulate sounds. Kelgar lifted himself to his full height. In one hand he clutched the crystal, in the other a dagger.

"I made you great," he said to Mallar. "I can take your greatness away." Mallar's muttered sounds still did not make words.

"Are you afraid of your own witch doctor?" Carnovan said.

Mallar took a step forward, away from the window toward Kelgar. Then he stopped. Rage and fear flickered alternately across his face.

"I'll talk to him, if you're afraid," and Carnovan walked briskly across the room to stand face to face with the witch doctor.

"Do you want to see a dothar flying?" Carnovan said softly.

"What insane talk —"

"Insane? You talked it first."

"But it was in my magic ball. Many strange sights are to be seen there."

"Including the sight of a holy one being stabbed in the back one dark night?"

Kelgar's crow eyes flicked toward Mallar, brooding by the window.

"Give me the magic ball." Carnovan held out his hand.

"Never," Kelgar shrilled.

"Keep your voice low, old man. Or shall I tell Mallar that you have known all along that your crystal controls the flow of the mighty power? Shall I tell him that you plan and have always planned to use it all yourself?"

Kelgar's eyes blazed with hate but he spoke quietly.

"We will test to see if my magic ball is the control. But I will place it in the machine myself."

"Go right ahead. But first, tell me, do you know the meaning of the secret writing there?" Carnovan pointed toward his equations.

"Those foolish marks —"

"The point you have missed, and Mallar has missed, is that those marks are a secret writing. You have to know how to read them to know how to make the crystal control the machine."

Kelgar did not believe him. Carnovan leaned closer, whispering now. "Old man! I know. He who helps me today rules Mars tomorrow. He who stands against me today will never live to see tomorrow. Mallar no longer trusts you."

"He fears me!"

"Once he feared you. Now he hates you."

Kelgar shuddered.

"If you play the game right, it may be that you and I will rule Mars. If you play it wrong, you will rot in the desert — and Mallar and I will rule Mars. Make your choice."

Greed came up in Kelgar. The crow talon came impulsively out to Carnovan. The big crystal dropped into the man's hands. It was soaked with sweat.

"If you betray me — this —" The other talon clutched the dagger.

Carnovan moved swiftly to the machine. "The Holy One has seen the light of reason," he called to Mallar.

"You had better see it also," the chieftain said. He came to the machine, stood by Carnovan, sword raised. As Carnovan slipped the big crystal into the depression under the bus bars, they stood behind him, one with a naked sword, the other with a dagger.

"They'll eat this rabbit, hide and all," the earthman thought. He forced such thinking out of his mind. As he slipped the crystal into place, a warmth touched his hands, caressing them. It was a gentle warmth but a feeling of vast power was in it.

"Now that I've got it, how do I actually work this thing?" he thought. His eyes went up to the wall where his equations were, to the laws of resonance as he had arranged them where he felt they belonged. He formed a picture inside his mind — and focused his gaze on the crystal.

In the crystal, the aurochs walked again, moving on short legs up a steep hill. Behind him, he heard Kelgar catch his breath and he knew the witch doctor was also seeing a picture there.

"What do you see?" he asked.

"I do not know. I have never seen this beast before."

Carnovan made a small sound, a whisper of understanding.

He felt full control of his mind, that rare ability to channel thought that comes only in the stress of utter concentration. But now there was no stress. Easily, carefully, he turned his thought into another channel, sent it, so to speak, down another path. And the machine responded as he had expected it would.

Under his hands, wholly obedient to his will, flowed the surge of a power that had never been known on Terra — at least during the recorded history

he knew. Perhaps an occasional mystic had hinted at it, perhaps some scientists, thinking beyond the actions and reactions of matter, had seen its dim outlines but no one, no man of *earth*, had ever found the means and method of its regulation.

"Stand a little farther back," Carnovan said. He sensed rather than saw the two take a step away from him. He extended and focused his thought. The thought was of Tiernden, down on the sands below.

"Well, earthman?" Mallar growled behind him. So far as they could determine, nothing was happening.

"In one moment —"

From the distance came sudden cries of alarm. Then came bellowing noises. They grew in volume.

"Look at the window, Mallar," Carnovan said.

The chieftain turned to the opening. His jaw dropped, his eyes bulged. What his thoughts were Carnovan did not know, but they must have been horrible things.

"A dothar, flying!" Mallar screamed.

The dothar was not flying. It floated there beyond the window, a great ungainly beast, all flopping ears and flailing legs attempting to find a footing in thin air. Its harsh screams were a continuous blast of sound. Floating with it, held to it by a leather thong, was Tiernden.

Mallar turned, sword lifted.

Carnovan took his hands from the crystal ball, let them drop to his sides. His mind still focused on the dothar and the dothar still floated in the air, Tiernden level with it at the end of his tether. Carnovan sighed with relief and turned his attention to the menace of the barbarians.

"Use the sword wisely, Great One." He smiled at Mallar. "It was your Holy One who foresaw that this would happen."

Mallar lunged, but not at Carnovan. The point of the blade went into Kelgar's midriff, through and out behind his back.

Kelgar shoved himself forward on the sword. The dagger struck. The point went into Mallar's throat. The chieftain clawed at it, pulled it free. Blood spurted and he made a gurgling noise.

They went down together.

Carnovan looked down on them without compassion, without hate. In the great Laboratory of man's progress there simply was no place for such as they.

Sandals rasped on the stone floor. Carnovan turned. The guards were lunging toward the door. They were brave enough, tough enough, but they, too, had seen a dothar flying.

Carnovan turned his attention to the window. The dothar and Tiernden

still hung in mid-air. Carnovan focused his thought, channeled it. He had a momentary impression of *something* flowing through the window. Outside, a heavy leather thong snapped like a thread. As it snapped, the dothar began to fall. It dropped out of sight, screaming. Its screams ended suddenly in a crashing thump. Then Carnovan heard other sounds: yells, the clatter of gear as Martians struggled to mount stampeding dothars, failed, then ran as best they could . . . away.

Carnovan listened. Yet, as he listened, and contemplated the rout below, he noted that a section of his mind was working with the machine. Tiernden floated to the window, grasped the ledge, couldn't keep a grip and drifted on into the room. He settled to the floor.

"Sorry." Carnovan bent to help him. "I meant to let go at the window. My control isn't precisely worked out yet."

Tiernden stared at the crystal ball, resting in its appointed place.

"So," he whispered. "All the time . . ."

The Terrestrial nodded.

"An aurochs is walking. It has come down off the cave wall, out of the secret writing. . . ."

"I don't understand," said Tiernden.

Carnovan put his hands on the crystal sphere and began his explanation.

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